

Message Text

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SUBJ: BRITISH AMBASSADOR COMMENTS ON BURU VISIT

SUMMARY:

1. BRITISH AMBASSADOR SIR JOHN FORD TOLD REPORTERS JAN.16
HE WAS IMPRESSED BY HIS RECENT VISIT TO THE BURU ISLAND DE-
TENTION FACILITIES AND URGED MORE VISITS BY FOREIGN OVSERVERS.
HE SAID BURU WAS NO A CONCENTRATION CAMP SUCH AS DESCRIBED
IN"GULAG ARCHIPELAGO" BUT IT COULD USE IMPROVED MAIL
DELIVERY, HEALTH, EDUCATION, READING MATERIAL, AND COMMUNI-
CATIONS FACILITIES. FORD CITED OPENNESS OF ACCESS TO DE-
TAINEES AND WILLINGNESS OF OFFICIALS TO LISTEN TO CRITICISM
END SUMMARY.

2. OUTGOING BRITISH AMBASSADOR SIR JOHN FORD TOLD A PRES
CONFERENCE JANUARY 16 THAT HE WAS IMPRESSED BY THE GENERAL
CHERRFULNESS AMONG POLITICAL DETAINEES ON BURU ISLAND
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PAGE 02 JAKART 00744 180506Z

DURING HIS JANUARY 12-15 VISIT(THE FIRST BY A FOREIGN
AMBASSADOR). HE ASCRIBED THEIR CHEERFULNESS TO THEIR
KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY WILL ALL BE RELEASED DURING THE NEXT
TWO YEARS. FORD SAID THE BURU CENTER, GIVEN ADEQUATE FER-
TILIZER AND PEST CONTROL, WAS MUCH BETTER OFF FROM AN
AGRICULTURAL POINT OF VIEW THAN SOME OF THE NEW RESETTLE-
MENT CENTERS HE HAD VISITED ON OTHER ISLANDS, AND THERE

WERE NO SIGNS OF MALNUTRITION. HE COMMENTED THAT IF MORE PEOPLE WOULD VISIT THE ISLAND IT WOULD IMPROVE INDONESIA'S IMAGE ABROAD AS WELL AS SERVING THE INTERESTS OF THE DETAINEES THEMSELVES.

3. ACCORDING TO FORD, BURU CANNOT BE COMPARED TO CONCENTRATION CAMPS SUCH AS THOSE DESCRIBED IN "GULAG ARCHIPELAGO", AS THERE ARE ONLY A FEW ARMED GUARDS AND NO BARBED WIRE. HE SAID HE WAS ABLE TO SPEAK FREELY WITH THE DETAINEES AS WELL AS WITH THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT IMPROVEMENTS SHOULD BE MADE IN THE FIELDS OF MAIL DELIVERY HEALTH, EDUCATION, READING MATERIALS, AND COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES, ADDING THAT HE HAD OFFERED TO PROVIDE SOME ENGLISH LANGUAGE BOOKS FOR THE DETAINEES. BOTH KOPKAMTIB OFFICIALS AND THOSE ADMINISTERING BURU WERE WILLING TO LISTEN TO HIS CRITICISMS, HE SAID, WITHOUT TRYING TO MAKE EXCUSES.

4. AMBASSADOR FORD TOLD REPORTERS HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO PROVIDE HIS REPORT ON CONDITIONS ON BURU TO OFFICIALS OF FMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IN LONDON ON REQUEST. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE AS PLANNED WITH ITS RELEASE PROGRAM AND MIGHT EVEN RELEASE ADDITIONAL DETAINEES IN AUGUST.

5. COMMENT: AMBASSADOR FORD'S REMARKS WERE CARRIED IN ALMOST ALL PAPERS JAN. 17, WITH GOVERNMENT-CONNECTED PUBLICATIONS EMPHASIZING HIS FAVORABLE DESCRIPTION OF CONDITIONS ON BURU BUT REPORTING MOST OF HIS OTHER COMMENTS AS WELL. WE ARE TRANSMITTING HIS COMMENTS TO US SEPTTEL.

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PAGE 03 JAKART 00744 180506Z

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